



THE VIRGIN ISLANDS POLICE DEPARTMENT
“To Protect and Serve”
Office of the Commissioner

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Back-to-School Child Passenger Safety Awareness

U.S. Virgin Islands - As students return to schools across the territory, the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety (VIOHS) reminds the motoring community to be vigilant when transporting child passengers. Everyone in the vehicle, despite age and seating position, must be appropriately secured.

Caregivers play a crucial role in creating a strong safety culture for those in their care. “When caregivers consistently buckle-up and ensure that their children do the same, they form habits that save lives,” advised VI Police Commissioner Ray A. Martinez. “The VIPD is committed to enforcing seat belt laws; they save lives.”

According to VI law, all children under the age of 14 must be transported and belted in the vehicle’s rear seat. Moreover, children, ages seven and under, must sit in an age- and weight-appropriate child safety seat as follows:

- Booster seats are required for children 40 pounds to age eight, or under 4’ 9” tall
- Forward-facing safety must be used for children ages one to 40 pounds
- Rear-facing safety seat are required for children, birth to age one or 20 pounds

Safe car seat fit is determined by the child’s age, weight and height. Parents should consult their car seat’s manual to determine the best time to transition children from one seat type to the next. “Car seats are proven to save the lives of young crash victims. However, they only work when used correctly and consistently,” cautioned VIOHS Director Daphne O’Neal.

Seat belts are designed to keep adult bodies safe. Allowing children to use just the seat belt before they are at least 4’9” tall, puts them at significant risk for sustaining life-threatening crash injuries. A child is ready for a seat belt when they can sit all the way back in the seat (without slouching) and touch the floor of the car with their feet. The seat belt should lie across their upper thigh and be snug across the shoulder and chest, never resting on the stomach or across the neck.

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Caregivers should consult a certified Child Passenger Safety (CPS) Technician to ensure that their child is in the right seat and that the seat is safely installed and used. For more information on seat belts, car seat use or to find a CPS Technician near you, contact the Virgin Islands Office of Highway Safety through Director Daphne O'Neal at daphne.oneal@vipd.vi.gov, or Occupant Protection Planner/Coordinator Denise Gomes at denise.gomes@vipd.vi.gov. You may also contact the office via telephone at (340) 772-3025 or (340) 473-7383.

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